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SPAIN'S POLITICAL FUTURE.

BY THE HON. HANNIS TAYLOR, LATE MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES TO SPAIN.

THE Editor of the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW has requested me to define the present status of political parties in Spain in such a way as to indicate the conflicting interests and ambitions that inspire each in the presence of a condition of things that may at any moment involve that unhappy kingdom in the throes of civil war.

Seven months ago this REVIEW called upon me to make, in substantially the same way, such a presentation of the Cuban question as would indicate the probable issue of a conflict in which this country was then as now deeply involved. In the midst of the general interest excited by that article certain thoughtless and passionate persons, to whom I have never before deemed it necessary to respond, saw fit to criticise with greater or less severity my right to speak at that time. In the light of subsequent events I now beg leave to submit to my critics the following considerations.

At the time of the appearance of the article in question I was a private citizen, endowed with all the rights and privileges of every other citizen, save so far as I was restrained by the proprieties incident to the fact that I had recently been entrusted by two administrations with the conduct of delicate and serious diplomatic negotiations. By virtue of that circumstance I was, of course, precluded absolutely from using, directly or indirectly, any private information that I had obtained in my official capacity. So religiously did I observe that obligation that no one has ever attempted to point out the smallest particular in which it was violated. And yet I would never have exposed myself even to the suspicion of indelicacy, had I not been impelled to speak

by the solemn conviction that it was my duty to try and say something that would hasten the termination of a conflict that was not only oppressing the people of my own country, but also involving the most sickening and wholesale sacrifice of human life ever witnessed in modern times. As those who were in charge of our foreign affairs were completely blinded and overreached at that time by Spanish diplomacy, I deemed it my duty to appeal to the people of the United States not to be lured deeper into the morass by the phantom of Cuban autonomy. As every one knows, the prediction then made by me, that that hopeless and belated experiment would end in smoke, has been more than verified. So sure was I of that result that I then ventured to predict that intervention by this government would become inevitable ; and in anticipation of that event I undertook to define technically the right of intervention, and to set forth categorically the special grounds upon which international law would sanction its exercise upon our part.

When the President finally resolved to adopt that policy, as the only one adequate to the necessities of the case, he did me the honor, in his message to Congress of April 11th, to paraphrase what I had said upon that subject in this *REVIEW* six months before, including the exact quotation from President Cleveland's message to the second session of the Fifty-fourth Congress then employed by me. I hope, therefore, that it will now be admitted on all hands that the article in question, objectionable to some at the time of its publication, has proven to be not only prophetic but influential in shaping the course of events. The great misfortune is that the suggestion of intervention was not accepted at the time it was made ; because, if it had been, not only the Cuban people but ourselves could have been saved very many of the frightful and unnecessary losses both of life and of property that have occurred since that time.

Every student of the Science of Politics, who has been trained in the Historical School, perfectly understands that no clear comprehension of existing political conditions in any country is possible without some understanding of the history of its past. As Mr. Freeman, in his now famous aphorism, has tersely expressed it : " Present history is past politics ; and past politics is present history." Of no country in Europe is that saying more true than of Spain ; in no other European land are existing political conditions

so hopelessly bound up with the past. We can only speculate as to what would have been the present aspect of Spanish politics had the French Revolution, instead of pausing at the Pyrenees, swept on to Gibraltar. The fact is that no such thing happened, and thus Spain was deprived of the opportunity of breaking away as completely as France did from medieval political ideas. And yet there was a time when Spain made a much closer approach than France towards real representative government. Prior to the consolidation of the Kingdom by Ferdinand and Isabella, the most notable representative systems anywhere to be found were those in Spain, which were afterwards trampled out by Charles V. and Philip II. But from that time down to the French Revolution pure monarchy prevailed in Spain, as in the rest of Europe ; and there was no country in which absolutist theories took a deeper hold than in that one which, after destroying its home parliaments, won for itself the first place "as the discoverer, conqueror and colonizer of new lands."

Nothing could have been more natural, therefore, than the rejection, by those who founded the Spanish Colonial system, of the idea that colonists should enjoy local self-government through the agencies of representative assemblies. The Roman pro-consular system was imposed by Spain upon each colony as it arose ; and home-bred Spanish officials were sent from the Metropolis to govern the colonists as if they were children or slaves, and to manipulate their commerce in the interest of the mother country. The basis of the system as a whole was the principle that a bureaucracy at Madrid should dominate absolutely in colonial affairs. It cannot be denied, however, that under that regime Spain had wonderful success in extending her colonial empire in the new world. She there so far outstripped all of her European rivals that, at the beginning of the present century, she owned in the three Americas more than all of her rivals combined ; she then possessed an area double the present extent of the United States, including Alaska. It has been Spain's misfortune not to be able to hold what she thus acquired—the despotic pro-consular system under which she subdued and settled her vast colonial domain has proven entirely inadequate for its retention. Through the cruel and short-sighted exercise of political tyranny on the one hand and commercial oppression on the other, Spain has lost, since the year 1800, seven millions of square miles of terri-

tory in North, Central and South America. Only Cuba and Porto Rico, representing less than forty thousand square miles, remain to her, and their loss now seems to be imminent. In the presence of that contingency there is a general belief that, if the worst happens, the present dynasty will be charged with the catastrophe, and as a punishment will be swept away in order to make place for some new and more competent regime. Whether or no such an organic change is to be made in the constitution of the Peninsula, is the question of questions which Spaniards must answer in the near future.

A mere glance at the record of civil wars and military revolutions that have occurred within her borders since the present century began should certainly admonish Spain to reflect before she plunges again into the abyss. Before the birth of Queen Isabella II. in 1830, the dynastic struggle which has clouded Spanish politics since that time began with the promulgation by her father, Ferdinand VII., of a "pragmatic sanction" abolishing the Salic law. When, upon the death of Ferdinand in 1833, his Neapolitan widow, Christina, as regent, asserted the right of her infant daughter of three years to succeed against the protest of the dead King's brother, Don Carlos, the fires of civil war were lighted; and the first Carlist struggle thus begun continued down to the surrender of the Basque provinces in 1839, and the abdication of the first pretender in favor of his son, Don Carlos II. In the next year, Christina, who was driven from the country by a military revolution, was succeeded as regent by General Espartero, who had made himself the hero of the first Carlist war. Three years later the scene shifted, and Espartero was driven out in favor of Christina, who upon her return had Isabella declared of age in order that she might be married to her cousin, the poor little mannikin, Francis d'Assis, while her sister, Maria, was married to the heir of the French throne, the Duke of Montpensier.

From the time of these marriage alliances—arranged through the cold blooded selfishness of Louis Philippe, who was fool enough to imagine that he had devised a plan to prevent Isabella from having heirs—military revolutions became the order of the day. In 1854, such an outburst under the lead of General O'Donnell forced the restoration of the constitution of 1837; in 1856, Madrid revolted and was declared in a state of siege, and,

in 1860, the second Carlist war began in favor of Don Carlos II., who was succeeded after its suppression by his brother, Don Juan. Insurrections then followed each other in quick succession until September, 1868, when the military movement against the throne, headed by Pim and Serrano, resulted in the expulsion of Isabella, who, with her mother and children, found an asylum in France. The republican uprisings that assailed the military regime thus established were sternly stamped out in blood, until something like repose was secured for a moment under a government by regency, established in June, 1869, with Serrano at its head. Then came the election in November, 1870, of Amadeus, the second son of Victor Emmanuel, who ended his troubled and unsuccessful reign by resigning in February, 1873. In the year preceding that event the third Carlist war broke out in favor of Don Carlos III., son of Don Juan, which for four years involved the country in more bloodshed and devastation than either of its predecessors.

In the midst of such trials it was that the Cortes, in June, 1873, proclaimed the Republic, with Pi y Margall as its first President; in July he was succeeded by Salmeron; and in September he gave way to Emilio Castelar. But the Lamartine of Spain, with all his genius and patriotism, could not work miracles. The republic was premature. Between movements for cantonal sovereignty, republican outbreaks in the south and Carlist uprisings in the north, it simply fell to pieces; and, in January, 1874, Castelar resigned the executive power, which was taken up at Madrid by Serrano, who held it until January, 1875, when the house of Bourbon was re-established in the person of the boy King, Alfonso XII., the only son of Isabella II.

Only by keeping firmly in mind the train of events that connect the accession of Isabella with that of her son, is it possible to comprehend the gigantic task that confronted the great statesman who re-established the monarchy, restored the reign of law and founded the political party which, to a great extent, conducted the affairs of the country under his leadership for the next twenty years.

Antonio Canovas del Castillo, undoubtedly the best equipped and the most useful statesman that Spain has produced in a century, came upon the scene at the moment when a firm, organizing, trained hand was needed to bring order and repose out of

a political anarchy that had sapped the very foundations of the kingdom. The licentious life of the Queen had so discredited the monarchy that she had been driven into exile by an outraged public opinion; the military element, by their repeated pronouncements, had become a menace to social order; the republic had proved an ignominious failure; the imported and unpopular Italian King had been forced to resign; the Carlists had nothing to offer but a renewal of civil war, whose ending in their favor promised nothing but a certain return to obsolete medieval ideas. To build up a stable constitution upon such a wreck was the task which Canovas was called upon to perform; and the manner in which he executed it will stand in the history of his country as a monument to his genius and patriotism.

The son of a school teacher at Malaga, he came into life under conditions that put him in touch with the best and truest people in Spain, the common people, the people who compose that firm democratic substructure upon which a new and higher political life will surely be erected. And yet, humble as his origin was, he was the son of a man of books, who directed his mind to study as a means of advancement. So precocious was he in that respect that he soon worked his way to the university at Madrid, where he won a reputation as a scholar that paved his way into public life. As a member of the Cortes, he had already risen to leadership before the time came for him to bring back the Bourbons—"my Bourbons," as he is said to have called them. In order to save the line and at the same time to get rid of Isabella, he induced her to resign in favor of her son Alfonso, then a boy of sixteen years. With the aid of Campos, he was able to induce the armies of the centre and north to proclaim the new King, who came to Madrid under the guidance and direction of Canovas as prime minister. With that much accomplished, the greater task remained of drafting a new constitution, in which the restored monarchy could be checked and limited by the safeguards imposed by parliamentary government in its modern form, and also by those legal guarantees in favor of the personal liberty of the subjects which are a necessary part of it. There seems to be no controversy about the fact that the present Constitution of Spain, drafted by Canovas in 1875, was as entirely the work of his hand alone as such a work can ever be the production of one man. To a student of

the science of constitutions it is a masterpiece; it is complete upon its face, and strangely wise in its dealings with many questions that vex monarchical statesmen. But to one who has watched the practical workings of Spanish politics it is very apparent that the theoretical conceptions of Canovas were far in advance of his nation. The people of Spain were not prepared for such a constitution; and the monarchy was not willing to accept in practice the restraints of a real parliamentary system. The result has been that the government of Spain has been carried on under the outward forms of a fundamental law whose central principle has been to a large extent set aside. The dominant force in Spanish politics since 1875, as before, has been the monarchy governing through a bureaucracy, with a prime minister at its head, chosen, in fact, by the Crown and not by the Cortes. To put the matter in another form Canovas erected for Spain in its constitution a true ideal of parliamentary government, but he was never able to make it a reality, because it was resisted both by the Crown and the ruling classes.

The fact is that the governing classes in Spain, consisting of the nobles, the clergy and the political and military administrators, are, as a general rule, worn out, weary and unprogressive. Canovas could only lead them so far; and he had the good sense to know that if he attempted to lead them farther he would march alone. Richelieu, in Bulwer's play, cries out: "I have recreated France!" It was beyond the power of Canovas to recreate Spain; he was only able "to lure to brighter worlds and lead the way." In order to carry out his designs for the improvement of his country, he organized the Conservative party, which, down to the day of his death, he directed absolutely. As far as he was able, he always drew into his service the best and truest men in the country, and in that he was always sustained and encouraged by the Queen Regent, whose high and noble nature spurns all that is low and ignoble. His one scourge throughout the greater part of his political life was the notorious Romero y Robledo, who has ever represented all that is venal, contemptible and reactionary in Spanish politics. This crafty intriguer for years bore to Canovas the relation that the Duke of Newcastle bore to the elder Pitt. If the spirits of Catiline and "Boss Tweed" could reappear in one man we would have another Romero. It was from such a man that the great scholar

statesman was continually forced to borrow influence to carry on the government. After the death of Canovas, it was perfectly natural that the audacity of Romero should have driven him to clutch at the leadership of the disorganized Conservatives by drawing to his side poor little Weyler, who, as a politician, is very small indeed. The only possible successor of Canovas is Silvela, a fine lawyer, a striking orator and an incorruptible man, who for many years broke away from his party because he said that he could not be the yoke-fellow of such a corrupt man as Romero. The Conservative party will no doubt perceive the necessity of driving out both Romero and Weyler, and of reconstituting itself under the leadership of Silvela, whose high character and accomplishments must compensate for his lack of that indefinable something which makes a practical statesman.

Through the greater part of his career Sagasta was Canovas' political *vis-a-vis*, as the leader of the Liberal party, which has always supported the present dynasty upon a broad and popular basis. For many years Sagasta was on hand ready to take power whenever Canovas saw fit to give it up. A good patriotic man at heart, Sagasta is in the full sense of the term an opportunist, whose idea is that a statesman should live from hand to mouth, trusting that each day will in its turn take care of itself. Carlyle, in his life of Frederick the Great, says of Walpole that: "He had one rule, that stood in the place of many: to keep out of every business which it was possible for human wisdom to stave aside. 'What good will you get out of going into that? Parliamentary criticism, argument and botheration! Leave well enough alone. And even ill alone. Are you the tradesman to tinker leaky vessels in England? You will not want for work. Mind your pudding and say little.' At home and abroad that was the safe *sec et.*" Such is the rule which Sagasta has always followed when it was possible to do so. Of late he has deviated from it simply because there was no escape, and the result has been "parliamentary criticism, argument and botheration."

Under the best circumstances Sagasta's political family has never been a happy one. While the peace of Canovas was broken by the conflicts between Romero and Silvela, Sagasta was harassed by the differences between the faction led by Moret and Gomazo. Moret is, however, by far the better and more enlightened man of the two. He is a perfect master of English; a man of broad

culture and travel ; and a firm believer in real parliamentary government. No Spanish statesman has had so clear a comprehension of the Cuban question from the beginning ; and, if he had been permitted to act in time, he is the one man who might have averted the present catastrophe. His long residence in England has put him politically far in advance of most of his contemporaries. Until recently, Canalejas was one of the rising young leaders of the Liberal party who stood close to Sagasta. He only drew away from Sagasta when he foresaw that the Cuban policy of the latter was doomed to failure and disappointment. In that way he has put himself in a position to be of special use to his country in the near future, possibly as the successor of Sagasta.

Such, then, in general terms is the attitude of the two great monarchical parties—Conservatives and Liberals—that have upheld the present dynasty since its re-establishment in 1875. Since that time they have been equally resolute in resisting the Republicans, on the one hand, and the Carlists on the other; and united they are more than a match for both. No matter what may happen in the external politics of Spain; no matter if she is stripped of all her colonial possessions; no matter if Romero and Weyler do try to stir up civil war for their own selfish ends—Spain is safe so long as Conservatives and Liberals stand together to maintain social order under the existing constitution.

No student of politics who has carefully examined existing political conditions in Spain can believe that the time has come for her to depart from monarchical institutions. If that be true why should the present dynasty be overthrown ? Why should the wise and devoted Queen Regent be driven out on account of national misfortunes, for which neither she nor her son is in any way responsible ? The most priceless possession of Spain to-day is Maria Christina, because she alone bars the door to the renewal of civil war, which, at this moment, would be destruction to the country. In this dark hour of Spain's history, her pure, womanly character shines forth, like a light in a dark place, around which all patriotic Spaniards should gather. If monarchical institutions survive, her overthrow means the accession of Don Carlos, who, apart from his utter and admitted worthlessness as a man, represents a set of medieval ideas and aspirations that would set Spain back into the past at least a century.

Assuming, then, that Spain will be wise enough to firmly re-

ject Carlism as a panacea for her present ills, would it be to her interest at this time to overthrow the monarchy in order to re-establish the republic? Nothing can be more easily demonstrated than the fact that a form of government, however good in itself, is not necessarily adapted to all nations and to all conditions. France has been struggling for a long time so to emancipate herself from her political past as to make possible a reconciliation between a republican regime and her monarchical and imperialist traditions. But France has been transformed through a revolutionary process to which Spain has so far been a stranger; and in that way France has reached a stage of political development into which Spain is not yet prepared to enter. There are certainly two very good reasons for thinking so. The republican experiment which began in June, 1873, under the presidency of Pi y Margall, and which ended in January, 1874, under the presidency of Castelar, was certainly a dismal failure. It fell to pieces at the end of seven months, after having had three presidents, all of whom are now living and members of the popular branch of the Cortes. Of the three the one of whom all the world knows is Emilio Castelar. If anybody clearly comprehends and loves Spain he does. In his mighty brain is stored away her whole history as a part of the history of all Europe; in his heart is enshrined a filial love of country as lofty and unselfish as ever ennobled a patriot. From the serene height of gratified ambition and unbounded personal influence, Castelar can judge, as no other man can, whether or no his country is prepared for a republic. Convinced years ago that she was not, he resolved, stern and unbending republican as he is, to retire from the political arena and to transmit his aspirations to another generation. Castelar has for years made no secret of the fact that he does not consider Spain ripe for a republic; and in his great, tender way he has often said that he could not attack the monarchy as now constituted, because he could not make war upon a woman and a child. And, even if some great tidal wave of unreasoning popular passion should sweep over Spain and submerge for a moment all existing institutions, there is reason to believe that the great voice of the nation will, in the same spirit, cry out above the storm, "We cannot make war upon a woman and a child."

Let us hope, then, whatever may come, that Spain will pause and listen to the self-denying words of her greatest and noblest liv-

ing son, words that warn her at once against the perils incident to Carlism, militarism and the republic. And if, perchance, crushing defeats at sea and internal dissensions at home should bring the once proud Castilian Kingdom to the feet of this great and growing Republic, will not our moral dignity demand that we, too, should remember in the hour of victory that both justice and generosity should characterize our dealings with a once friendly nation, whose destinies are in the hands of a woman and a child? When the end comes, let us resolve to be just and generous not only to Cuba, but to Spain, too.

HANNIS TAYLOR.